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NATION'S YOUTH

PHYSICAL DETERIORATION: ITS  
CAUSES AND SOME REMEDIES

BY  
THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK

With an Introduction by  
SIR JOHN E. GORST



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A NATION'S YOUTH









THE DOUNTESS OF WARRICK.  
*From a Portrait by Mr. HENRY COBBETT.*

# A NATION'S YOUTH

PHYSICAL DETERIORATION: ITS  
CAUSES AND SOME REMEDIES

BY

THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK

*Author of "Warwick Castle," "The Life of Joseph Arch," etc.*

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GENERAL

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE.

AMONG the notices of my article on Physical Deterioration as it originally appeared in the March issue of the *Fortnightly Review* one of the most interesting was by Dr. C. W. Saleeby, who gave up to the subject his "Scientific Notes" in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of March 9th.

Not only is Dr. Saleeby an authority on child physiology and psychology, but his testimony is the more valuable in that he is a well-known critic and opponent of Socialism, his latest published work, "Individualism and Collectivism," being a championship of the former against the latter, somewhat on the lines of Spencer's "Man *versus* the State." Consequently, nothing but the imperative necessity which, as a physician and psychologist, he perceives, would induce him thus to subscribe to more stringent Factory Acts.

In the review above referred to Dr. Saleeby says:—

"The Countess of Warwick has some remarks in the current *Fortnightly Review* which urgently need all the emphasis that can possibly be lent to them. . . . From one standpoint the fundamental argument against child labour in any shape or form is humanitarian. We cannot but feel in our heart of

hearts that the thing is a scandal to our kind. But in these notes the standpoint must be, at any rate primarily, scientific."

After some quotations from the article, including one referring to the condition of half-timers, Dr. Saleeby continues:—

"To all of this, the psychologist, of course, and the physician can only say, 'What other results could you possibly expect?' . . . Evolutionally the intellect of man is a late product, and in the history of the individual it does not awaken until comparatively late. . . . It is with the dawn of manhood or womanhood that the intellectual faculties, as a rule, first find themselves. Surely no one will dispute this statement. Were there not the complication that a child's immediate economic value undergoes marked increase at this time, it would appear a self-evident proposition that the really serious part of schooling or education so-called should begin so soon as the crisis of puberty is successfully over-past. But, of course, considerations of this kind have never been recognised in British politics or polity. We are so immeasurably practical that we much prefer to muddle through. Nature, however, as Bacon observed, is to be commanded only by obeying her, and though she may be flouted for a day, *die Zeit ist unendlich lang*, and she cannot be flouted for ever."

FRANCES EVELYN WARWICK.

May 1st, 1906.



## INTRODUCTION.

BY SIR JOHN E. GORST.

MR. DISRAELI, the founder of the modern Tory party, entertained throughout his life a deep and sincere sympathy with the working classes. "Sybil; or, The Two Nations," in every line of which this feeling is displayed, was written by him when the leadership of a great party and the premiership of the country were wild dreams, and he retained this sentiment through his subsequent successes to the day of his death. But he was also a statesman; and when household suffrage was established he perceived that no party in the State could long retain a position of stable power which did not possess the confidence of the great masses of the people, who are guided in the long run, like other classes, by their interest. It was upon this principle that he reconstructed the Tory party after the disastrous election of 1868. His domestic policy was to establish justice between employers and employed, and to ameliorate the condition in which the poor lived, by what his opponents sneered at as "a policy of sewage"; and when in 1874 his patience was rewarded by a Parliamentary majority, his Government passed a series of measures of which the benefits may still be felt by every poor man in the United Kingdom, both in his workshop and in his

home. The Liberal Administration which followed did little to develop their predecessors' schemes of social legislation. Mr. Gladstone had none of his great rival's sympathy for the poor; his predilection was for the old Liberal policy of letting social affairs alone and for devoting the energies of government to financial and political reforms.

On the downfall of the Liberal party, consequent upon Mr. Gladstone's first disastrous attempt to establish a separate Parliament in Ireland, the late Marquess of Salisbury became Prime Minister of Great Britain and Ireland, and leader of the Tory party. The ideals with which the party had been inspired by its great leader, Mr. Disraeli, had not then entirely faded from its view. Social reforms for ameliorating the condition of the poor were still talked of on Tory platforms. Lord Salisbury, indeed, had never at any time the same kind of sympathy for the working classes as Mr. Disraeli. The latter regarded them as equals to whom justice should be done; the former, as inferiors to be treated with generosity and compassion. A spirit of aristocratic privilege and class ascendancy was already creeping over the Tory party; and however much its leaders might continue to flatter the people in public, in private the mass of electors was regarded and spoken of by "Society" with feelings of contempt akin to those with which Coriolanus regarded the plebeians of Rome. But Lord Salisbury was a statesman: he knew that the continuance of his power depended on popular sup-



port, and that the good-will of the people must in some way or other be retained. Lord Randolph Churchill, during his brief political career, upheld the principles of Tory Democracy; and the late Mr. W. H. Smith, whose sympathy with the workers was profound, became leader of the House of Commons, a large proportion of the members of which were pledged to social reform.

Such was the condition in Great Britain of the Labour question, when, in 1890, the German Emperor summoned an International Conference on the subject to be held in Berlin. His invitation was accepted by the British Government, and a body of delegates to represent Great Britain was appointed. It contained three eminent representatives of the working classes—Mr. Thomas Burt, still in Parliament as member for Morpeth; Mr. Birtwistle, Secretary of the Lancashire Weavers; and Mr. Burnett, the Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade. None of the British representatives had longer or more intimate conversations with the German Emperor than Mr. Burt, and the Emperor specially thanked Lord Salisbury for sending him such a man, and for the valuable knowledge he had derived from his communications. All three took a full share in the consultations of the British delegates among themselves and in the public proceedings of the Conference, and nothing was done without their advice and concurrence. The British delegates were in close telegraphic communication with the Foreign Office in

London, and there was not a step taken or a declaration made in the name of Great Britain that was not sanctioned and approved by Lord Salisbury and the Government. This appears from the official papers afterwards laid before Parliament.

The subjects discussed at the Conference related chiefly to the employment of women and children in factories and mines ; and at that time the legislation of Great Britain for the protection of such persons was in advance of that of nearly all foreign States. There was, indeed, an idea prevalent among manufacturers in this country that they were handicapped in their competition with foreigners by the benevolent provisions of our laws, and that if foreign states could be persuaded to enact like protection for their people it would be beneficial to British industry. This opinion, although no doubt erroneous, may have had something to do with the readiness of the Government, which was falling more and more under capitalist influence, to take part in the Conference. However, the British delegates, according to instructions, posed at the Conference as the friends of laws for restricting the labour of women and children ; they boasted of what Great Britain had effected in the past, and declared her readiness to make further advance in the same direction in the future. At one of the public meetings of the Conference the representative of Great Britain declared that the delegates could, on behalf of Great Britain, undertake that her Government, faithful to its traditions in the past, would

resolutely conform in the future, if it did not even go beyond, the benevolent principles of the Conference.

The sincerity of these declarations on the part of the British Government was very speedily put to the test. The Berlin Conference fixed the minimum age for factory workers at twelve; the minimum age in Great Britain was at that time ten. In the year following the Conference, a Government Factory Bill was brought in: it contained no provision for raising the age. An amendment to raise the age, not to twelve, but only to eleven, was actually resisted by the Government in spite of the earnest appeal of Mr. Burt, but carried by a majority of the House of Commons against official Government opposition, so great had the power and influence of capitalists over the Conservative leaders even at that time become. Years afterwards, when a private member brought in a Bill to raise the age to twelve, the Unionist Government, from whose programme social legislation had by that time vanished, absented itself altogether from the discussion, and effect was at last given by the British Parliament to the Berlin pledge in the absence and without the guidance or consent of the British Government.

At the dissolution of Parliament, which took place two years after the Berlin Conference, the Tory Government fell, and with it fell all immediate prospect of social legislation. For the Liberal Government again attempted to establish Home Rule in Ireland, and on the failure of this second attempt

fell into a condition of paralysis and impotence from which it did not for many years recover. A Unionist Government took its place supported by a large majority in Parliament, and pledged as deeply as a party could be pledged to social reform. Their appeal to the electors was that while social reform was urgently needed and was demanded by the people, the Liberal party was by its own confession impotent; that it could do nothing but make useless political changes, and attempt to dissolve the union of the United Kingdom; that the Unionist party, if returned to power, had no political innovations to make, and would devote its whole energy to reforming administration and enacting laws for the improvement of the condition of the people. "Vote for the Tory Candidate and the Reform of the Poor Law" was the common electioneering placard, especially in rural districts. How these election pledges have remained for ten years unfulfilled is a matter of history. Hardly was the Government settled in office, when it abandoned the principles of Tory Democracy in favour of a new policy invented by Mr. Chamberlain. The amelioration of the sad condition of the poor, who constitute about a third of the population of the British Isles, gave place to schemes for extending the power and prestige of the British Empire. The people became intoxicated with the glory of conquering two little Dutch republics in South Africa. The military splendour of the British Empire, in substitution for the happiness and physical well-being of

the British people, became the stock-in-trade of Primrose dames. The new statesmen fondly flattered themselves that by stirring up the love of fighting and the pride of national conquests, the masses could be for ever cajoled into sacrificing themselves to the classes.

In 1900, while the war fever was at its height, and while the people had not yet awakened to the fact that they had gained little and lost much in the South African enterprise, the Unionist Government succeeded by an electioneering trick in obtaining a fresh lease of power. But the same sort of impotence fell upon them after their victories in Africa as fell upon their predecessors after their defeat on Home Rule. During the whole period for which the Unionist Government held office no social reform of first-rate importance in either administration or legislation was accomplished; after the resignation of Lord Salisbury, indeed, constructive statesmanship seemed to disappear. The Employers' Liability Act, a legacy from their predecessors, to which their partisans point as their greatest achievement, is now undergoing amendment; and the law, when amended, will confer on the British workman protection far inferior to that which the German workman has enjoyed for more than twenty years. So far from reforming the Poor Law as promised in 1895, one of the last Acts of the Unionist Government was to adopt the old dilatory plan of appointing a Royal Commission to inquire into its operation, as if it



was inquiry and not action that the people demanded. The indifference of the new Tory party to the welfare of the poor culminated in the proposal to tax the food of the people in order to promote the glory of the Empire and furnish additional opportunities of accumulating wealth to capitalists and financiers. The great majority of the party greedily and enthusiastically threw themselves into the scheme, in spite of the feeble and unsuccessful opposition of their leader. Those who were active and earnest in resisting such a tax were driven out of the ranks of the party. The catastrophe that followed was sudden and complete. The people have withdrawn their confidence from the Tory party—possibly for ever.

The Liberal party is now upon its trial. If it succeeds in carrying out effectively the social reforms which the Tory party promised and failed to accomplish, it may enjoy a long term of office and power. Lady Warwick's book puts the case by means of a concrete example clearly before the public. A large portion—one-third, or less—of the growing children of the nation are spending their childhood in a state of semi-starvation; their sufferings are aggravated by the torture of having to work in this condition with body and mind in the public elementary schools; they can never grow up into healthy men and women who will be a strength and support to society. Besides this, numbers of boys and girls are having their capacity for productive industry, even while still at school, destroyed by premature labour, neither whole-

some nor educational; and instead of becoming skilled workers, are likely to sink when grown up into the ranks of unskilled labour and the unemployed. These are Imperial questions of much greater moment than the goldfields of the Rand, the reduction of expenditure, or the settlement of the religious difficulty in education. Will the Liberal party succeed in solving them? Will they give the people of Great Britain as good domestic government as the people of Germany have enjoyed for many years under their expert bureaucracy? If they cannot, the Liberal party will forfeit the confidence of the nation as the Tory party has done, and the people will have to seek elsewhere for the redress of the social misery under which they groan.

JOHN E. GORST.





# A NATION'S YOUTH.



A striking consensus of opinion was elicited as to the effects of improper or insufficient food in determining physique, and this factor was acknowledged by every witness to be prominent among the causes to which degenerative tendencies might be assigned.—Report of Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (216).

Want of food, irregularity and unsuitability of food, taken together, are, in his (Dr. Eichholz') opinion, the determining cause of degeneracy in children.—*Ibid.* (289).

The State, whose sacred duty it is to protect the poor and helpless, has been robbing the children of the poor, and leaving them to perish for lack of that maintenance to which they are entitled. The injustice brings its own punishment, for our national system of education is spoiled, and the children grow up feeble and diseased to fill our hospitals, workhouses, and gaols, to weaken our empire and our nation, and taint our population with a crowd of incapables.—SIR JOHN GORST at the Guildhall, January 20th, 1905.

## I.

THE evil of militarism has at least one compensation in the fact that even the most confirmed "statesmen" and most permanent of officials begin to perceive the impossibility of keeping up an army without a supply of—soldiers. One day there may arise a new kind of statesman who will regard a healthy nation as a thing

**Physical  
Deterioration.**

good in itself even though no food for cannon be needed. Meanwhile we may be thankful for almost any motive which leads our rulers and governors to consider the nation's children not merely as an appanage of their parents, but as the seed-plot of the race.

We have been groping our way to this view. The Poor Laws have long given the child, in theory at any rate, the right to shelter and sustenance on its own account. Latterly this theory has been more freely applied, and under the Act of 1899 Guardians have become *in loco parentis* even to children whose parents had been supporting them, but were considered unfit to have control of their lives. The Industrial Schools Acts, Youthful Offenders Act, Prevention of Cruelty to Children Acts, have all gone to modify the pernicious idea that you are to punish bad parents by making their children suffer. Reluctantly we have granted recognition to the claims of children as human beings. Thus we have already snatched from the fetish of "Parental Responsibility" some portion of the human sacrifice offered to it. When shall we begin to doubt if the interests of the race are being served by the annual massacre of innocents yet thought necessary?

One looks wistfully for a general recognition of the fact that it is exactly the poorly fed, ill clad, and therefore imperfectly educated children of to-day who become the ignorant, stupid, slovenly parents of tomorrow. It is amazing to hear public men admit the facts which lead to this conclusion, yet stare the con-

clusion in the face and pass it by. In the Parliamentary debate on Free Meals on March 27th, 1905, Sir William Anson, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, replying to Messrs. Keir Hardie and William Crooks, admitted that in the Day Industrial Schools, where the children had three meals a day, he found them "bright and intelligent and being developed physically and mentally in a satisfactory way." So potent a factor was the regular and wholesome supply of food that although they lived at home he found that "their condition was thoroughly satisfactory." Yet he could not admit this as an argument in favour of seeing that *all* children are well fed! Mr. Wilson Bruce followed other witnesses before the Scottish Commission in pointing out the startling superiority of industrial school children, and added that if we fed and clothed the elementary school children as suitably we should "make a new race of them." The Commissioners note this contrast between the ill-nourished children of respectable parents and the well-developed children of those who have "altogether failed in their duty," and describe it as "both marked and painful."

What fine moral have we here? Be a bad parent, or confess yourself unable to control your own children, and they will be attached to an industrial school, given three meals a day, "largely at the expense of the ratepayers," and become "bright and intelligent boys, developed physically and mentally in a satisfactory way." This is by way of encouraging



a sense of "parental responsibility"! It is an attitude of mind not only devoid of logical basis but pitifully parochial. Yet on no subject is it more necessary for us to "think Imperially."

It is not as though we were asked to enter on a long, dark or dangerous road. If there be one fact emphasised by modern physiology it is the extraordinary recuperative powers of human physique. To remove inferior physique and morale we have but to "give the children a chance," and we may literally "make a new race of them."

"These inferior bodily characteristics which are the result of poverty," said Professor Cunningham to the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, "are not transmissible from one generation to another. To restore, therefore, the classes in which this inferiority exists to the mean standard of national physique, all that is required is to improve the conditions of living, and in one or two generations all the ground that has been lost will be recovered." Dr. Eichholz said that "all evidence points to active, rapid improvement, bodily and mental, *in the worst districts*" (Committee's italics), "so soon as they are exposed to better circumstances—even the weaker children recovering at a later age from the evil effects of infant life." "Nature," he added, "gives every generation a fresh start." Dr. Hutchinson, Physician to the London Hospital, pointed to the remarkable improvement of boys in the Navy schools. Colonel Napier put in tables showing the extraordinary de-



velopment of Army recruits under regular and sufficient feeding.

Above all other causes of national deterioration or of lack of improvement, the consensus of opinion placed the want of regular, sufficient, and wholesome meals for so large a number of children.

## II.

### **The Case for Free Meals.**

WHEN we consider the facts to which I have so briefly referred, how pitiful do some of the stock objections appear! Indeed, in view of those facts is it possible to doubt that not only the sense of "parental responsibility," but all the qualities of which such a sense is typical, would best be fostered by rearing a complete generation sufficiently nourished and clad to benefit by its education?

This is not a demand that the State should forthwith incur the actual cost of feeding and clothing all the children, since the majority of parents are already fulfilling this duty to the best of their ability, and will naturally prefer to continue so doing as far as possible, even though it be by a contribution. But what common sense and humanity do demand is that no children, for any reason whatever, should be allowed to fall below a certain standard of food and clothing.

Mr. F. H. Bentham, Chairman of the Bradford Board of Guardians, which has done its best to defeat the intention of the Local Government Board

Order on the feeding of children, wrote bitterly in the *Municipal Journal* (Sept. 8th, 1905) that the Order is "not the result of any demand made by the people generally nor by parents in particular. It is the outcome of an agitation made on their behalf by the leaders of Socialist opinion."

If this were true, then so much the greater tribute to the Socialists. On that showing they would be the only persons thoroughly alive to the practical interests of the race. Fortunately, it is but half true, for although the Socialists have led the agitation, there is at the back of it not only the solid support of the trade unions and of such gatherings as the Guildhall Conference, but also a rapidly growing body of general public opinion, as evidenced by the resolution adopted by a number of Town and Borough Councils. The striking evidence gathered by the Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland and the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Degeneration cannot be ignored. Physiologists, general practitioners, medical officers of health, inspectors of schools, teachers, were agreed as to the deplorable prevalence of underfeeding. The Special School Board Committee of 1895 reported that the London School Dinners Association alone gave 122,605 meals per week to Board School children, of which 110,000 were given free. Yet some districts appear to have been scarcely touched. Dr. Eichholz, inspector of schools, found that in one school in a very bad district "90 per cent. of the children are unable, by rea-

son of their physical condition, to attend to their work in a proper way, while 33 per cent., during six months of the year, from October to March, require feeding." He estimated the number of actually underfed children in London schools as approximately 122,000, or 16 per cent. of the elementary school population. This does not cover the number of children *improperly* fed. Mr. W. H. Libby said that a feeding agency in Lambeth coped with from 12 to 15 per cent. of the school children, and in the poorest districts 25 to 30 per cent. Dr. W. L. MacKenzie, Medical Officer to the Local Government Board for Scotland, said that in the slums of Edinburgh a large proportion of children were half-starved. Dr. Kelly, Catholic Bishop of Ross, said that in the South of Ireland children commonly came to school underfed. All the evidence went to confirm the statement of Dr. Macnamara in the House of Commons (March 27th, 1905) that after thirty years' experience of schools, first as a teacher and later as a School Board member, he could say that 20 per cent. of the children had not in any way benefited in the general improvement of conditions, and were in "an entirely hopeless condition—a condition never more hopeless." This, he added, covered something like one million children in the British Isles.

The more important witnesses were agreed as to the necessity for State intervention. Dr. James Niven, Medical Officer of Health for Manchester, said "that the child must be fed at any cost, and that no



voluntary agencies could possibly cope successfully with the evil." The Committee says: "With scarcely an exception, there was a general consensus of opinion that the time has come when the State should realise the necessity of ensuring adequate nourishment to children in attendance at school; it was said to be the height of cruelty to subject half-starved children to the processes of education, besides being a short-sighted policy, in that the progress of such children is inadequate and disappointing; and it was further the subject of general agreement that, as a rule, no purely voluntary association could successfully cope with the full extent of the evil" (348). In making this statement the Committee ignores a number of witnesses who sought to minimise the evil or lightly regarded the necessity for intervention; but this is explained when we note how often they have to add to such opinions, "Could give no statistics,"—"Had no figures,"—"Admitted not having considered the matter fully,"—and so forth. The Committee's summary is based, not on mere opinions, but on evidence furnished. They were, no doubt, already familiar with the class of persons who "don't believe" anything that disturbs their vanity, their class privileges or their pocket interests.

One of the strangest objections to State intervention is from the people who claim that you would thereby prevent the parents sacrificing themselves for their children! Mr. Sharples, the President of the National Union of Teachers, in opposing the official

resolution at the Guildhall Conference, brought forward as evidence against the existence of general underfeeding that "he had known many cases where the man had gone short in order that the children should be fed." He did not explain what happened when the underfeeding of the man had impaired his powers as a wage-earner and he had become one of the unemployed. Mr. Sharples would then no doubt rank him as one of the "thrifless scoundrels" for whose punishment he clamoured as apparently something more important than the feeding of the children. Why this eager thirst for "punishment"? A desire for reformation would come with better grace, at any rate, from the President of the Teachers' Union. Indeed, with the official head of such a profession the interests of the children might well come before any other consideration at all. It would be a pardonable weakness.

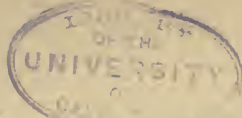
The position into which such an attitude of mind leads one is shown at Bradford, where the Education Committee has handed over its powers under the L.G.B. Order to the Guardians, who, in order to "punish" parents for letting their children be fed, are charging them with 3d. for a meal, which on their own admission should cost no more than 2d., and in reality costs less per head of children supposed to be fed. The parent has the choice, on the one hand, of paying the 1s. 3d. per head per week, and either impairing his own vigour as a wage-earner or seeing the younger children go short; or, on the other hand, for-

bidding the school child or children to take the meals. At the meeting of the Bradford City Council on November 29th, 1905, it was shown that men earning less than 20s. per week, even as low as 12s. average earnings, and even men out of work, were summoned for payment of the 3d. per meal. The costs of the various summonses would have fed a large number of children. The apologists for these barbarous and wasteful methods admit that a man in such poverty should not be pressed for the money; but they ignore the fact that it is the best class of men, just the very class most deserving of consideration, which is most determined to hide its poverty when it comes to facing an inquisition or anything in the nature of a demand. To keep up appearances their children unhappily must go short of food. The class which spends nothing on furniture or books, makes no attempt to save, cares nothing for "appearances," pays nothing to a trade union or benefit society, and takes coals and blankets from every possible source, is just the class which will most readily plead and demonstrate poverty when there are forms to be filled in. It is the curse of the greater part of our voluntary charity, and in a considerable measure of our Poor Law system, that they tend to demoralise the less deserving, whilst withholding help from those to whom it is most valuable as a temporary aid. Those who are most glib in their phrases as to "parental responsibility" are invariably the greatest enemies of the spirit from which such a sense of re-

sponsibility springs. Those who would force young children to do class work on empty stomachs rather than run the risk of "pauperising" their parents are at the same time vaunting the extent to which the "charity" of private patrons has rendered it unnecessary for men to claim the assistance of the nation which they have served by their labour! It is supposed to pauperise a disabled or unemployed man if his children are fed from the common stock of wealth which he has helped to create, but not so if they are fed by the proceeds of the liquor trade or company promotion or slum rents or coal sold at artificial prices during the months of bitterest cold. A man's spirit of independence is supposed to be shaken if his children receive help from the community, but somehow quite preserved if they only have it from individuals, whom possibly he hates or despises for the methods by which they have grown rich.

We do not hear anything about well-to-do people's children being pauperised by being fed and clothed at Christ's Hospital School out of endowments stolen from the poor. Indeed, what school has turned out finer men than this? Nor is it suggested that parents are pauperised by their children receiving maintenance scholarships, which in some cases mean not only being fed, but clothed from public or semi-public funds. Such scholarships, being given in order that studies may be pursued, are no discredit, but an honour. "This person," we say, "is too valuable to be let slip. We must not throw away the results of





his previous education." Are not *all* our children too valuable to be allowed to miss the full benefits of education by reason of physical weakness and exhaustion? No one who understands what it means for a child to attempt study in an almost habitually underfed condition would waste time on Mutual Improvement Society platitudes and Charity Organisation Society shibboleths whilst hundreds of thousands of children are passing through our elementary schools with little other result from their education than ophthalmia, spine curvature, nervous irritability, and the seeds of consumption.

One constantly hears complaints as to the difficulty of getting conscientious clerks and workmen. They are "so inert." Their minds are "more occupied with sport than with their duties." They are "so anxious to escape from their work." One can't get "domestic servants." The girls "prefer factory life, meals of tea and bread and butter, the excitement of crowded streets and music-halls." Usually such complaints end up bitterly with the question: "What good has all this School Board education done them?" The product of the elementary school is compared unfavourably with a former generation, which had neither of the three R's, but more sturdiness and alertness of mind.

There is some justification for these complaints. Half-fed boys and girls stand a better chance of development if they are altogether free from class work. Mr. Legge told the Scottish Royal Commission that

underfed children were positively injured by even light exercises. Dr. Dukes said that bare subsistence diet became starvation diet when mental and bodily work were added. Other witnesses condemned the attempt to teach ill-nourished children as positive cruelty. If the choice with such children is to lie between school on the one hand, or, on the other, idling and play in parks, waste grounds, or even the streets, then obviously it is the latter choice which gives them the best chance in life, and in this is the justification of the gentlemen who add to their advertisements for coachman or gardener the ironic phrase: "No scholar need apply," or "One who can neither read nor write preferred." But why should the matter be left to such a choice of evils as indicates that we are less concerned about the breeding of our children than about that of our horses, cattle, or pigs?

Last year's Local Government Board Order has certainly some value as an attempt to reduce the confusion, waste, and overlapping caused by the work of various agencies, such as the Poor Law and Educational authorities, the Police, the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Dr. Barnardo's, the Churches, or benevolent individuals and committees. But if no more than that is to be done, then the Order may even be misused as it has been at Bradford, where, in the name of some malignant eighteenth-century theory, the number of children fed was admittedly reduced by nearly one-half.

Apart from actual underfeeding, there is the evil

of improper feeding, which can only be met by some system which will insure that the children get daily at least one wholesome and properly served meal. One effect of this would be that the parents, through the children, would learn some invaluable lessons as to the selection and preparation of food in the home. Want of knowledge, want of skill, and want of means, is the trinity of deadly evils that poisons the life of at least 25 to 30 per cent. of our children. The particular curse of poverty is that everyone is able to take advantage of it. Just as the rent, per cubic foot, of a slum garret is twice that of a Park Lane palace, so the poor man's shilling brings him, alike in quantity and quality of food, a return pitifully inferior to that secured by the shilling of the well-to-do. "Whoso hath not, from him shall be taken." The value of organisation, large buying, and skilful preparation is shown in Paris, where in 1904 eight million good meals were supplied to school children at a cost of  $2\frac{1}{4}$ d. per meal.\* Speaking in the House of Commons, June 1st, 1905, Sir John Gorst recalled the striking fact that before the London School Board Committee commenced to organise the relief of their children, as much as £40 per head was being spent on wasteful and imperfect attempts to feed children by voluntary charity. Now £5 would both feed and clothe a child.

\* The total cost was £75,000, of which £15,000 was received as subscriptions, £20,000 was paid by parents, and £40,000 contributed from the public funds.

For widowers, widows, women separated from their husbands or with sick or crippled husbands, and for married women going to work, as often happens in the North of England, it would be an incalculable blessing for the children to have their mid-day meal at school, and it is the mid-day meal that is, on the whole, most important. Where the choice is actually to lie between a scant breakfast or a scant dinner, the former is probably the lesser evil. It is after the exhaustion of the morning's work and confinement, and just before the physical exertion of playtime, that a good meal has the greatest value. There are differences of opinion on this point, but on the whole the weight of opinion leans to this view. One advantage of a common mid-day meal would be the saving of time now spent in trudging to and from home, often in rain, snow, fog, or heat, and sometimes for considerable distances. The incalculable advantage in effectiveness of teaching and discipline thus secured is well known to every teacher who has had any experience both in a day-school and a boarding-school.

In France, Italy, Belgium, and Switzerland every stage of the feeding of school children may be seen, from that undertaken by voluntary agencies to the case of Vercelli, in Italy, quoted by the Fabian Society in an excellent tract called "After Bread, Education." The Council of Vercelli not only supplies public meals to the school children, but makes attendance at the same compulsory unless a medical



certificate can be produced to show that feeding would be injurious to the child!

The voluntary agencies receive increasingly large grants from the public funds,\* and the tendency is steadily towards the Councils taking over the work, although in such cases they are usually prepared to receive contributions from parents and from charitable persons. Further, just as the attempt to keep the matter in private hands is being abandoned, so gradually the attempt to discriminate between the children is breaking down under similar practical difficulties to those which killed school fees in this country.

Against the demand for the adequate feeding of our children there is only one argument which is not based on abstract theories or false sentiment, and that is the question of expense. But this argument, if accepted, leads to the entire abandonment of our schools, for money spent on feeding alone, giving us thereby a race of healthy barbarians, would be bringing a better national return than money spent on teaching alone, from which we may expect a race of spectaclled and anæmic degenerates. If the one expenditure is unjustified, the other is yet more unjustified, and had better be abandoned, leaving our children to the freedom of the lanes, streets and parks.

\* Usually Municipal grants. A new return issued by the Board of Education and Foreign Office [Cd. 2926] shows that State funds are received by Rome, Madrid, Zurich, Baden, and some other cities, and Municipal funds only by Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Brussels, Antwerp, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Milan, Bergen, Stockholm, Barcelona, and a number of other cities.

### III.

**The Evils  
of Immature  
Labour.**

IT is fitting that those who invoke the sacred name of "the family" in their campaign against the feeding of hungry children, should be the first to abandon that position when one touches what has ever been the greatest enemy of home life, namely, child labour. That same parent, whom it was so necessary to punish—at the expense of his children—is now to be protected—equally at the expense of his children. Having buttressed "family life" on the sure and sound foundation of ill-nourished childhood, we are now asked to rear an edifice of commercial supremacy on cheap, immature labour. Not a pen of gold nor a voice of silver seems able to bring home to some minds the fact that our deadliest competitors are not those who rely on immature and untrained labour, but those who best equip their workers for a place in the nation's workshops. If cheap and immature labour were a source of successful competition, we might at once bow our heads before the rivalry of Russia, Italy, Spain, and Turkey. As a fact, it is America, Germany, and industrial Switzerland against which we are measured, and it is in these three countries that the elementary school age is highest, most vigorously enforced, and technical and secondary education most available at the end of the elementary course. In the canton of Zurich, and in eight

American States, the compulsory school age has already been raised to sixteen years. Whatever may be said as to comparative standards of living, a matter largely of rent and prices, there can be no question as to the increased productivity and efficiency resulting from the longer school term.

As other countries have surpassed us in educational efficiency, so also we lag tardily in the matter of protection and restriction of youthful labour. It is false to say that we are kept back by other countries. At the International Conference of 1890 it was made clear that we were the real culprits. Lord Salisbury telegraphed to our representative at Berlin an assurance that the British Government was sincere in its desire for reform, yet not only have we failed to make up arrears, but have allowed ourselves to be beaten in pace by other countries. The recent Home Office return (April 12th, 1906), summarising the reforms effected in conformity with the decisions of the International Conference, show us in by no means an enviable light. Sixteen years ago we agreed that the work of "young persons" should be limited to ten hours per day. Although Germany has conformed to this, we have not. Belgium is more tender for children under fourteen years than we have shown ourselves. It was decided, too, that underground work should not be permitted before fourteen years. This reform we have not adopted, although Austria has done so. Austria, Norway, and even Portugal, all come out above us in the returns.

The recent Royal Commission and Inter-departmental Committees have left us in no doubt as to the evils which immature labour brings, not only directly upon each generation, but through the girls upon each succeeding generation, for the effects of sustained mechanical labour or exhausting drudgery upon boys of from twelve to sixteen years are exceeded by the injury to those who are to be mothers and nurses of future workers. No less serious is the mental and moral injury arising from the practical stoppage of education at the most hopeful and critical age, and these two evils act and re-act upon one another. It is no mere coincidence that the English county with the largest proportion of child-workers has too often the record figures for crime, drunkenness, and disease. The existence of the "half-time" system gives us deadly parallels in physical and educational results, of which the meaning must be clear even to the most hide-bound opportunist politician who ever styled himself a "statesman." In some districts, as in Dundee, where a large, although happily decreasing, number of children are employed in the jute industry, the half-timers are, as far as possible, segregated, and certain schools are reserved for full-time scholars, as otherwise their standard of efficiency could not be maintained. For the effects on those who have altogether escaped educational influences we have evidence piled upon evidence. The reports of the recent Commissions and Committees only confirm what everyone really interested in the future of the race

might, with a very little research, already have learned.

For the last two or three years our most thoroughly genteel and superior daily and weekly papers have been giving space to decorous protests against the futility of much of the education in our "public" schools—meaning, of course, such schools as are least of all "public." Occasionally even really capable and readable articles appear, such as those of "Kappa," in the *Westminster Gazette*, or the incisive and entertaining comments of Mr. H. G. Wells. Yet all alike write as though they actually *were* speaking of our public schools and of the youth of the nation. Professed friends of education and of intellectual life, many of them appear ignorant of the fact that the troubles they deplore are quite trifling compared to the widespread evil of injurious work cast upon the shoulders of the young in order that the wages of adults may be saved. Imagine the feelings of a Lancashire or Yorkshire factory child, or a London milk-boy or shop-boy, on reading the following passage from one of "Kappa's" articles:—

"Why should not youth know?" I asked myself. "Why should its best years be portioned out between dead task work and idle child's play, both seeming deliberately calculated to conceal from it the splendour and the mystery of this strange adventure of life, on which, for a little space, it is embarked? We are given some two or three score years to enjoy the pageant of the universe and contemplate the



miracle of existence ; and we let our ingenuous youth waste their intelligence on dismal pedantries and their admiration on despicable trifles. Is it so surprising, after all, that my young friend should move as a blind man among 'the glories of his blood and state'?

"We move in the midst of a stupendous fairy tale, compared with which the most fantastic Arabian Night is humdrum and pedestrian. What was Aladdin's Palace to the dome of the million jewels which is nightly builded over our heads, marvellous to the eye, but incomparably more marvellous to the mind? What were the adventures of Sinbad compared with the toils and vicissitudes, the triumphs and defeats, of our fathers and our brothers, the race of man on earth? We are compassed about with glories and mysteries, and we feed our children's souls on Greek accents and bowling averages!"

The nation's youth has, as a fact, already reached premature manhood and womanhood at the age when a handful of rich men's children are thus engaged on "Greek accents," "bowling averages," and "idle child's play." To the child worker or "young person" of the Factory Acts the life of Eton or Rugby would indeed be a splendid adventure, a chapter in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, a stupendous fairy tale!

Putting aside the regular half-timer of the industrial districts, there are in every great city thousands of children who, in addition to their day's



schooling, do four or five hours' work daily to add a few shillings—usually a very few shillings—to the family income.

Then comes emancipation from school and such results as were described before the Royal Commission by Mr. Wilson, H.M. Inspector of Factories. Speaking of a boy of fourteen, he said:—

“The hours will be long—fifty-five per week—and the atmosphere he breathes very confined—perchance also dusty. Employment of this character, especially if carried on in high temperatures, rarely fosters growth or development. The stunted child elongates slightly in time, but remains very thin, loses colour. The muscles remain small, especially those of the upper limbs. The legs are inclined to become bowed, more particularly if heavy weights have to be habitually carried; the arch of the foot flattens, and the teeth decay rapidly” (1927, 1930).

He adds:—

“The girls exhibit the same shortness of stature, the same miserable development, and they possess the same sallow cheeks and carious teeth. I have also observed that at an age when girls brought up under wholesome conditions usually possess a luxuriant growth of hair, these factory girls have a scanty crop which, when tied back, is simply a wisp or ‘rat's tail.’”

The Raw  
Material of an  
Imperial Race!

Dr. Dukes submitted to the Scottish Committee some striking comparative tables of height, weight, and growth respectively in the artisan class and the most favoured classes. I will make one extract, conveniently re-arranged, to show the contrast at the age of fourteen:—

TABLE SHOWING AVERAGE HEIGHT AND WEIGHT AND ANNUAL RATE OF INCREASE RESPECTIVELY OF 7,855 BOYS OF FOURTEEN FROM THE TOWN ARTISAN CLASS, AND 7,855 BOYS OF FOURTEEN FROM THE MOST FAVOURED CLASS, SUCH AS "PUBLIC SCHOOL" BOYS.

	Average Height without Shoes.	Annual Growth in Height.	Average Weight, including Clothes.	Annual Growth in Weight.
Artisan Class...	57.76 in.	1.83 in.	84.61 lbs.	6.34 lbs.
Most Favoured Class ... ..	61.11 in.	2.32 in.	99.2 lbs.	10.61 lbs.

These figures are striking enough, but more deadly in effect than columns of such statistics are those two pictures of Mr. Wilson's showing youth robbed of all poetry and tenderness, all freshness and fulness, all vista and depth, robbed even of simple health and animal spirits—in fact, of all that the word "youth" should bring to mind.

#### IV.

IN the interests of national physique, then, there are some forms of work—notably work in mills, factories, and mines—which should be commenced at a later age than now. In the interests of the development of mind and character, education should be continued beyond the age now common. The two reforms run on all fours. That they would be expensive is evident; but we are an extraordinarily rich nation and have ample funds for such purposes. If present sources of taxation are not adequate, new sources can readily be found, if not by our present class of governors, then by those who must replace them. Moreover, there are reforms which add to the national riches, the source of which is in the efficiency and productivity of the people. These are reforms which ultimately must pay for themselves in meal or malt.

Putting the matter into practical shape, I suggest that the age of compulsory elementary school attendance should be raised to sixteen years, subject to certain exemptions based, not as now merely upon ability to pass a given standard, but mainly upon the destination of the scholar when leaving. For instance, exemption would be granted to a child going into naval training, because here a continuation of its education is assured.

**A Longer  
School Life.**

The conditions of exemption might be as follows:—

(*a*) At not less than fourteen years, where a child was entering upon a certain course in science, art, or technology, including cookery, &c., at recognised classes under inspection by the Board of Education. The minimum attendance might be (say) two afternoons of three hours, or three evenings of two hours, with such home work as should secure systematic private study. The general rule would be day classes, but exemption for evening classes could be granted where occupation of a non-injurious character was proved. Apprentices would come under this rule, thus systematising and improving the present variety of methods under which, by a wise compulsion on the part of some employers, apprentices are either made to attend evening classes, or are given so many afternoons per week to attend day classes, or are kept for a term in the shops, then sent for a session to a technical school, then another term in the shops, and so on alternately. The details of the courses would vary according to the rules of the Board of Education, and a failure to sustain the courses would be reported to the local authority, exemption being withdrawn, and the scholar returned to the elementary schools.

(*b*) At not less than twelve years, where a child was entering a secondary school. Here

also failure to sustain the course would be reported. There would have to be a considerable extension of scholarships, giving free teaching and books, with a contribution to maintenance in the last year, or two years, dependent upon a certain standard of proficiency.

(c) At not less than twelve years where a child was entering upon naval training, practical agricultural work, or some other career considered beneficial. Such exemption would carry with it compulsion to attend classes on scientific agriculture or such other courses as were deemed necessary by the Board of Education.

All scholars not thus exempted would, on passing the seventh standard, go on to a higher type of elementary school. These schools might vary in character. One type of school would devote particular attention to drawing, geometry, and manual work. In another, history and modern languages would have special attention. The schools for girls would be separate, and would probably give special attention (say) to laundry, dressmaking, and cookery. These would be of a similar type to the present Domestic Economy day schools of the London County Council. There could be more than one type of girls' school, if necessary.

From these higher elementary schools the earliest age for partial exemption would be fifteen, and for total exemption sixteen years. The standards for total and partial exemption should not be left to the



local authority, but fixed by the Board of Education, as also the occupations to be deemed so beneficial—or, at any rate, so harmless—as to justify partial exemption. As far as possible, these might be scheduled.

This is, of course, only a rough outline scheme, and it undoubtedly involves a great expense ; but before long we shall have to enter upon some such reform, even if only in self-defence against our better-equipped competitors. Already in the United States, according to the Mosely Report, the proportion of pupils attending secondary schools is 9.5 per 1,000, as against 5.5 in this country, and this progress in the United States has been attained comparatively recently, and therefore all the more rapidly by contrast with ourselves.

Whether we have or have not degenerated compared with, say, fifty or a hundred years ago may be a question difficult to settle, but it is quite clear that we are pitifully, disastrously below the normal standard of manhood and womanhood which a great nation should set itself.

Adequate nourishment for our children, immunity from exhausting and mechanical employments at the most critical period of adolescence, an extension of educational influences—can there be any objects of expenditure more likely than these to repay themselves a thousandfold in the improved vigour and intelligence which form the only sure basis of a nation's greatness ?



## V.

IT might be well to make it clear that I have only been dealing with certain causes of physical deterioration and with the more immediate and practicable remedies. Bad housing, insanitary conditions, a defective or injurious milk supply, are serious evils affecting young lives in particular. So also is the employment of women too late before, and too soon after, child-birth. This is an evil difficult to check; the law is systematically evaded, and will be so long as the only attempt to cope with it is by repressive legislation. Not only is this an injury to the young child, but a greater injury to any that follow. So many of the suggestions for improvement here are met by the old cry of "interference with family life," although in the factory districts family life has been pretty well destroyed. In any case, whether in connection with this or the other reforms already dealt with, surely we must recognise that the family is a human institution, maintained for the purpose of elevating the race and advancing its higher interests. But that does not justify us in using it as an argument *against* the interests of the race. It is for the children's sake above anything else that "the home" exists, and the community has a right to know how far the institution unaided serves its purposes. Is it, for instance, giving

**Conclusion.**

us a healthy, vigorous, and progressively increasing race?

Let the Registrar General's returns answer that question with their falling marriage-rate, falling birth-rate, and appalling infantile mortality. Despite all improvements in sanitation and the generally lowered death-rate, the rate of infantile mortality is practically where it was twenty-five years ago. When we have 145 deaths under one year of age out of 1,000 births we may judge something of the stamina of the majority of survivors.

The falling marriage-rate, and to a certain extent the falling birth-rate, are due largely to the fact that our complex and chaotic civilisation does not secure to the majority of men the prospect of a livelihood. No amount of personal desert on their part ensures them either regularity of employment or adequate payment for their work. The more prudent hesitate to marry, or if they marry, limit their families. The less prudent marry early, have families, and if the luck be against them, help to make up those terrible figures of the Registrar General, which show us that one-third of the total deaths each year are children under five years of age. Of the children born in the year 1900 barely one-half are yet living.

Have we not, then, to reconsider our attitude towards children? Or perhaps I should say, Should we not accept in the fullest and frankest way the attitude which actually we were adopting when we entered upon compulsory education? If we do that

logically, we shall see that children, after all, are primarily the children of the nation, and that it is the nation's first concern to secure their health and well-being, if possible through their parents, of course, but if not so, then by whatever other means which seem most feasible.

There are opponents of free meals for hungry children who say that this will lead to clothes and boots for ragged children, and so on up to the State accepting responsibility for the child. They are quite right. The development is inevitable, but it would be more satisfactory if the position were faced now, and not arrived at through a dreary succession of squabbles, manoeuvres, and petty compromises. We have been reiterating, until some seem firmly to believe it, that the poverty and misery which come upon the home when unemployment, sickness, accident, or death befall the bread-winner, are things only due to the man's own imprudence, want of thrift, and so on. We have said this to such purpose that the prudent and thoughtful are every day now less inclined to marry or to have children. If that tendency increases I suppose we shall one day have a population mainly composed of the offspring of imprudent and selfish persons! Then the Charity Organisation Society and the neo-Malthusians will be satisfied.

More than any of the practical reforms which I have here advocated do we need a facing of the situation in a healthily frank spirit and with such amount of logic as we can muster.

Is the future of the race in doubt? Then let the children be our first care. Let us lavish on their nurture and upbringing all the wealth that the richest country in the world can provide. There is no way in which we could get a greater return for such outlay, and no task which could more ennoble a nation in the doing.

